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Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2173 (2014), by which the Council extended the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 30 June 2015 and requested that I report every 90 days on the implementation of the mandate of the Mission. The report provides an update and analysis of the conflict and the political and operational environment in Darfur from 26 February 2015, the date of publication of my previous report (S/2015/141), until 15 May 2015. It also presents the achievements of UNAMID in implementing its revised strategic priorities endorsed by the Security Council under resolution 2148 (2014), as well as progress in addressing the challenges impeding the effective discharge of the mandate of UNAMID. In addition, the report provides an update and recommendations on the process of transferring some mandated tasks of UNAMID to the United Nations country team in the Sudan and on the development of an exit strategy for the Mission.

II. Conflict dynamics and security situation

A. Current trends and conflict dynamics in Darfur

2. The reporting period was marked by an escalation of hostilities between Government forces and the rebel factions, namely, the Sudan Liberation Army faction Abdel Wahid (SLA/AW), the SLA faction Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) and the Justice and Equality Movement faction Gibril Ibrahim (JEM/Gibril). The Government intensified its counter-insurgency operations with the launch of the second phase of Operation Decisive Summer, led by the Rapid Support Forces, leading to additional displacements of the civilian population. Violence also increased as a result of intercommunal conflicts over land, access to resources, migration issues and tribal rivalries. The proliferation of small arms and the weakness in State authority also led to a rise in criminality and banditry targeting the local population.

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Fighting between Government forces and rebel groups

3. Fighting between forces of the Government of the Sudan and Darfur rebel groups occurred mainly in the Jebel Marra area. Control of this territory, or at least free access to it, is a key military objective for both camps. At the beginning of March, after a lull in the second phase of Operation Decisive Summer in February, Government forces launched a series of attacks against the armed movements in some strategic locations in the Jebel Marra area. On 2 March, the Rapid Support Forces ambushed a convoy of SLA/MM elements in Khormaley, Northern Darfur, one of the two entry points into Jebel Marra. The attack reportedly caused significant casualties on the SLA/MM side, with 17 elements killed. One member of the Rapid Support Forces was also killed. On 8 March, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces attacked an SLA/AW outpost in Tiro village, Central Darfur. Reportedly, four Sudanese Armed Forces personnel and two SLA/AW combatants were killed. In response, on 11 and 13 March, SLA/AW launched two successive attacks against Government forces in Rokero, Central Darfur. The attacks reportedly resulted in a high number of Sudanese Armed Forces casualties, an unspecified number of vehicles, weapons and ammunition being seized by SLA/AW and the capture of the Sudanese Armed Forces base in the locality, forcing the Government troops to withdraw from the area. On 19 March, heavily armed Rapid Support Forces elements were observed moving from Golo to Rokero, which according to reports received by UNAMID, Government forces recaptured on 20 March. As SLA/AW elements control the surrounding areas, the situation remains volatile around Rokero. UNAMID has been unable to verify reports of fighting in Rokero owing to access denials for its patrols by the Sudanese Armed Forces.

4. Fighting subsided from late March to mid-April, when Government forces directed their efforts away from Jebel Marra towards securing electoral operations. The heavy deployment of Government forces during the election period led to a significant reduction of activities by the armed movements. However, aerial bombardments continued during the period. On 1 April, UNAMID received reports of aerial bombardments taking place in Rowata village in Central Darfur in support of a Sudanese Armed Forces ground attack against SLA/AW positions. A UNAMID verification patrol dispatched to the area on 6 April was able to confirm the dropping of 10 bombs that killed 14 civilians, including 5 children, injured 18 others and destroyed 15 houses. While the verification patrol was in the village, the team witnessed another aerial bombardment on the same day, consisting of five bombs close to where they were standing, damaging a UNAMID vehicle. One civilian was killed and three others were injured during the concurrent bombardment.

5. Fighting resumed following the conclusion of the electoral process, when, on 26 April, the Rapid Support Forces reportedly ambushed a large Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) convoy of approximately 300 vehicles coming from South Sudan, comprising JEM/Gibril and SLA/MM forces, in the Nikhara area near Tulus, Southern Darfur. UNAMID received reports of Government aerial bombardment in support of that Rapid Support Forces attack. The bombing reportedly resulted in the killing of 15 civilians and the wounding of 17 others in the nearby village of El Tomat.

6. Following the Nikhara battle, the Government announced that its forces had defeated SRF, killing "thousands" of their elements, including field commanders, and seizing a number of vehicles and weapons. Government officials also announced the beginning of what they described as the "cleansing of Darfur" from the remnants of armed movements. On 27 April, President Bashir travelled to Tulus to congratulate his troops. On 29 April, JEM/Gibril issued a statement in which it admitted its troops had suffered heavy casualties in the Nikhara battle, but refuted that the war in Darfur was over.

7. Several days later, SLA/MM announced that it had inflicted heavy losses on Government forces during fighting in Northern Darfur on 2 May. The movement claimed that its forces had killed 60 Rapid Support Forces elements, including a unit commander, and had destroyed 9 vehicles. The fighting reportedly took place in Jumeiza, in the vicinity of Kutum, Northern Darfur.

Local conflict and intercommunal violence

8. During the reporting period, UNAMID recorded 11 incidents of intercommunal clashes resulting in 278 fatalities, as compared to 8 clashes resulting in 40 fatalities in the previous period. Conflicts between Arab tribes over cattle rustling continued to be the main cause of increased violence, especially in Southern Darfur. In most of the cases, the Government reacted with a view to stopping the violence, but has had limited lasting success, as reconciliation processes initiated did not address the root causes of inter- and intra-tribal conflicts over land, natural resources and cattle rustling.

9. The incidence of cattle rustling was particularly high in Southern Darfur during the reporting period, with armed elements taking advantage of the ongoing migration season to carry out raids against neighbouring communities. The relative absence of security forces in most of the areas where the rustling occurred created the conditions for violent retaliatory raids by community self-defence groups and a vicious cycle of attacks and reprisals. In Central Darfur, Beni Halba and Borno elements clashed on 6 March in Orokom in the vicinity of Zalingei. Two persons were killed and four others injured. The conflict between Southern Rezeigat and Habaniya tribes, which erupted on 24 March in the Sunta locality, Southern Darfur, over mutual accusations of cattle theft, was an illustration of this pattern. The conflict resulted in the death of 10 Habaniya and four Rezeigat individuals, and the wounding of 16 Habaniya and 6 Rezeigat individuals. From 21 to 23 March, another similar cycle of violence was observed in Radoum, between Salamat and Fallata. The violence quickly spread to six villages in the vicinity, resulting in the death of 112 persons, the wounding of 42 others and the displacement of approximately 150 Salamat families.

10. Beyond cattle rustling, the weaknesses and limitations of local authorities supporting reconciliation processes aimed at addressing previous tribal violence led to the resumption of some conflicts. In this regard, a deadlock in the reconciliation process between the Arab Ta'aisha and Salamat tribes following their violent confrontation in 2013 led to a renewed vicious cycle of attacks and reprisals in Riyad al-Bardi, Southern Darfur, throughout March, which resulted in the evacuation of hundreds of Salamat families from the area. Similarly, in Eastern Darfur, the intercommunal conflict over land and resources between the Ma'alia and the Southern Rezeigat Arab tribes resumed, following the failure of local authorities

to support the provisions of previous reconciliation mechanisms, in particular those related to the establishment of native administration courts to strengthen justice at the grass-roots level and the administration of the *diya* payment (blood money). As a consequence, deadly intermittent clashes between the two sides were reported in March and April, resulting in 28 casualties (10 Ma'alia and 16 Rezeigat individuals and two Central Reserve Police personnel). Fighting resumed again on 11 May, when approximately 7,000 Rezeigat and 4,000 Ma'alia heavily armed men clashed in Eastern Darfur. The fighting started in Abu Karinka and spread to several villages in the vicinity, where houses were burned, properties were looted and hundreds of families were displaced. UNAMID reported on 11 May 2015 that at least 105 persons had been killed on the Ma'alia side and 60 injured, while 15 Rezeigat individuals had lost their lives. The injured persons were evacuated to Adila and Khartoum with UNAMID support. The fighting subsided on 12 May, following the deployment of Government troops and mediation by local authorities, traditional leaders and a delegation sent from Khartoum.

11. The destabilizing impact of numerous paramilitary groups also continued to exacerbate tensions between local communities. In Northern Darfur, armed Arab Zeyadiyah, reportedly members of the Border Guards and the Central Reserve Police, attacked the Berti community on 27 February in two separate incidents in Makisi village near Malha, killing five and abducting eight Berti. The attacks were carried out in retaliation for the alleged murder of five Zeyadiyah by the Berti, which the latter denied. Despite the signing on 23 March of an agreement to cease hostilities mediated by local authorities, attacks by the Zeyadiyah continued until the end of March, resulting in the killing of at least 33 Berti and 14 Zeyadiyah individuals and the displacement of approximately 30,000 Berti families.

Criminality and banditry

12. Violence committed by organized criminals taking advantage of the overall law and order and security vacuum remained a significant concern for the population in Darfur. A total of 316 crimes were recorded by UNAMID during the reporting period, compared with 61 in the previous one. Violence and gang activity continued to be concentrated in major urban centres and in the vicinity of internally displaced persons camps. The most common crimes included armed robberies and attacks (178 incidents), deadly shootings (23 incidents), assaults (25 incidents), sexual and gender violence (37 incidents), carjackings (11 incidents), abductions (8 incidents), cattle rustling (19 incidents) and arson (15 incidents). Most of the crimes were perpetrated by Arab militia and unidentified armed groups.

13. Abduction remained a coercive method adopted by the various tribes in Darfur to obtain the payment of *diya* claimed from other communities. On 26 February, a group of armed Arabs kidnapped a Massalit internally displaced person in the Ardamata camp and demanded ransom for his release. On 21 April, members of SLA/AW abducted an Arab nomad for the alleged killing of another SLA/AW element and obtained the payment of SDG 50,000 before his release.

14. The absence of Government authorities in remote areas impacted on law enforcement, and the inefficient judiciary system continued to contribute to a culture of impunity and repeated crimes. On 26 February, two armed men shot and killed two internally displaced persons and injured another in Oyuor, near Zalingei in Central Darfur. On 4 March, a Sudanese Armed Forces soldier indiscriminately

fired at a group of people in a market in El Fasher, killing one person and injuring four others. Unidentified armed men, on 7 April, attacked a commercial vehicle in Sheq Jorab in Eastern Darfur, killing five passengers and injuring seven others. In a similar incident, on 2 May, unidentified armed men attacked two buses in Hajar Hamman in the vicinity of Kabkabiya. Three persons were killed and eight others were injured.

15. An increasing trend of sexual and gender-based violence targeting women and children was also recorded during the reporting period. In most of the incidents, the victims were engaged in livelihood activities, while the perpetrators were not arrested. On 9 March, a female internally displaced person returning from farming activities was raped by an unknown man near Tawila, Northern Darfur. In the same locality, two other girls were raped on 17 March by two armed men. On 13 April, a female internally displaced person from Rwanda camp near Tawila was beaten and raped by two unidentified men dressed in military uniform. In a similar incident, armed Arab men, on 15 April, attempted to rape four Massalit female internally displaced persons near Sisi camp. A male internally displaced person intervened and, in the process, one perpetrator was injured. A group of armed Arab men besieged the camp and claimed compensation of SDG 5,000 for the treatment of the injured perpetrator. Lack of confidence among the victims and their families in the Government's capacity to conduct proper investigations, the absence of Government police in some areas, fear of retribution and the social stigma attached to being subjected to sexual violence continued to cause under-reporting of cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

B. Election security

16. The reporting period was marked by the conduct of the general elections in the Sudan from 13 to 16 April. Polling activities took place without major security incidents and amid reports of low voter turnout. Demonstrations against the electoral process, however, took place in a number of internally displaced persons camps, including the Hamidiya and Hassahissa camps in Central Darfur, Kalma camp in Southern Darfur and the Mournei and Rogatas camps in Western Darfur. On 13 April, Government police forces dispersed a demonstration in the Mournei internally displaced persons camp in Western Darfur, during which six internally displaced persons and three policemen were injured. In addition, on 14 April, anti-riot police arrested 20 students, while dispersing a demonstration of approximately 200 students at El Fasher University. Seven policemen and an unconfirmed number of students were injured in the incident. According to media reports, these were violent clashes between students supporting the National Congress Party (NCP) and students from Darfur in Khartoum, Omdurman and Port Sudan.

C. Operating environment

Attacks against UNAMID

17. During the reporting period, 60 incidents and hostile acts against UNAMID and its personnel were recorded throughout Darfur, compared to 46 in the previous period. These included armed attacks and carjacking (9 incidents), robbery/road

banditry (18 incidents) and office break-in/burglary/theft (33 incidents). At least 12 out of the 18 incidents of armed robbery targeting UNAMID staff were recorded in El Fasher. All of these incidents occurred in the special security zone established by UNAMID with the support of the Government Diplomatic Police, creating an environment of insecurity and forcing UNAMID to redeploy additional resources to ensure the security of its personnel. During the reporting period, several incidents of petty crimes, such as damage to UNAMID properties, were also recorded, including at least three incidents targeting the water supply system of the Mission team sites.

18. On 23 April, approximately 40 unidentified armed men attacked UNAMID troops protecting a water point in Kass. UNAMID forces responded robustly and repelled the attack, killing four attackers and injuring one, in the ensuing exchange of fire. During the incident, two peacekeepers sustained injuries and two UNAMID vehicles were taken by the armed men. The Mission troops pursued the attackers and successfully recovered the vehicles. The bodies of the four militiamen killed were handed over to the Government of the Sudan Police Commissioner and Sudanese Armed Forces Military Commander, who visited the team site later in the evening.

19. The following morning, approximately 150 unidentified armed men were observed on horses moving towards the Kass team site, upon which the UNAMID Quick Reaction Force was dispatched from Nyala to the Kass team site for reinforcement. The Quick Reaction Force was attacked near the team site and returned fire. Four peacekeepers were injured in the attack. After a 20-minute firefight, Government forces intervened and the fighting ceased. After this second incident, UNAMID engaged the Government of the Sudan at both the local and national levels, urging it to conduct a swift and thorough investigation to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. However, in the following days, Government officials accused UNAMID of killing defenceless Sudanese citizens in Kass, claiming that a number of them had been killed inside the UNAMID camp in violation of the status-of-forces agreement and their rules of engagement. Following these accusations, a large number of armed men gathered and surrounded the Kass team site, threatening UNAMID and requesting the payment of *diya* for persons killed during the attacks on the Mission. They dispersed on 27 April.

20. On 7 May, armed members of the Government Diplomatic Police personnel, aboard three gun-mounted vehicles, arrived at the main entrance gate of the UNAMID headquarters in El Fasher. They forced their way into the compound to demand payment of their monthly allowances for services rendered under the Joint Security Operation Centre. Gate activity was suspended for six hours until the situation was resolved. That was the second such incident related to the violation of UNAMID premises by armed elements of the Government during the reporting period. On 14 April, Government police pursuing a student of El Fasher University who was fleeing after a demonstration forced their way into the compound and apprehended the student, who was trying to seek refuge inside the camp.

21. On 13 May, Sudanese Armed Forces military intelligence personnel fired warning shots at a UNAMID helicopter that reportedly flew over their camp in Muhajeria, Eastern Darfur. Military intelligence personnel subsequently advised the Mission to avoid flying over their sites in the future.

Attacks against United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations and humanitarian personnel

22. The worsening security environment in parts of Darfur continued to have significant implications for the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. Carjackings, lootings and general banditry reduce the ability of humanitarian actors to provide assistance, and/or increase the costs of doing so, creating an untenable situation. In most areas of Darfur, United Nations agencies rely heavily on UNAMID for escorts, area security and logistical capacity as a means of mitigating security risks and operating constraints.

23. A total of 40 criminal incidents against humanitarian actors were recorded by UNAMID during the reporting period, a relative decrease compared to 73 in the previous period. These included 1 armed attack, 7 carjackings, 5 robberies or road banditry incidents and 27 office break-ins, burglaries and thefts. Out of the seven carjackings, only three stolen vehicles were recovered.

24. Among the most notable incidents was one that occurred on 10 March, when an unknown armed group attacked a convoy of 19 World Food Programme logistics trucks escorted by UNAMID in Neni village, Northern Darfur. A UNAMID national staff driver was severely injured and evacuated to El Fasher. During the incident, UNAMID troops escorting the convoy exchanged fire with the assailants who subsequently escaped with three vehicles, one contracted fuel tanker and some food items. Only the three vehicles were recovered. On 12 May, a group of armed men carjacked a World Food Programme car in Um Dukhun, Central Darfur. Government police recovered the vehicle on the same day, but no arrests were made and the investigation is ongoing.

Restrictions of movement, access denials and denial of clearances imposed on UNAMID

25. UNAMID continued to experience restrictions of movement, access denials and denial of security clearances for its patrols and other activities. During the reporting period, UNAMID encountered 24 restrictions compared to 39 in the previous period. Restrictions were most often imposed by local officials in areas of ongoing or recently concluded hostilities between Government forces and rebel factions. In this regard, since the last inter-agency assessment mission to Jebel Marra in June 2014, the authorities have denied UNAMID permission to escort humanitarian actors to Jebel Marra and insist that Government police should provide armed escorts to aid agencies.

26. Local authorities also imposed bureaucratic impediments, particularly in relation to the provision of administrative authorizations, thus hindering the conduct of some specific mandated tasks. Subsequent to the incidents of 23 and 24 April in Kass, Southern Darfur, UNAMID resupply convoys travelling from Nyala were denied access to the Kass team site by Government authorities on 25, 26, 27 and 28 April before finally being granted passage on 29 April.

27. During the reporting period, the Government of the Sudan refused clearance for 68 sorties out of 2,189 planned UNAMID flights, compared to 30 out of 3,910 during the previous reporting period. Flight restrictions were imposed following the attack against UNAMID troops in Kass, with 49 out of 949 scheduled flights cancelled between 28 and 30 April. On 30 April, Government authorities informed

the Mission that it would no longer be allowed to operate direct flights from team sites in Southern Darfur to headquarters in El Fasher, and that all flights would have to proceed through Nyala. These changes and unprecedented delays in the clearance of routine and properly submitted passenger and cargo manifests for fixed-wing and helicopter flights connecting the Mission's main axis from Khartoum to El Fasher and from El Fasher to Sectors East, South and West led to the cancellation of a number of flights. These restrictions have had a significant impact on UNAMID operations, causing delays in troop rotations, resupply operations, the movement of civilian personnel and increased costs, as additional flights had to be added to sector operations.

28. On 26 April, the National Intelligence and Security Services refused to allow an emergency medical evacuation of an injured Ethiopian peacekeeper to proceed, by air, from Mukjar to Nyala, citing security concerns. The peacekeeper, who had been injured in an accident, died the same day.

Access denial and restrictions imposed on humanitarian actors

29. While it has been possible to provide basic assistance to tens of thousands of newly displaced people, previously reported challenges in terms of partial or delayed humanitarian access remain unresolved, as evidenced by the continued inability of humanitarian actors to reach areas in Central Darfur reported to be worst affected by Government operations against armed groups. With the exception of Guldo, the authorities continued to deny access to other locations in Jebel Marra, despite reports from local officials and humanitarian partners of growing needs and tens of thousands of displaced people.

30. In addition, local authorities in Zalingei turned down a request by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department to conduct monitoring visits on projects in deep-field locations. This is the third time this year that local authorities have denied donors access to monitor their projects in Central Darfur. Such denials hinder efforts by aid organizations in Darfur to mobilize resources, thereby contributing to broader funding challenges. At the time of reporting, only $280 million of the $1,035 million required to meet humanitarian needs across the Sudan in 2015 had been provided (27 per cent).

Visas

31. During the reporting period, 595 visas were approved by the Government, including for 35 civilians, 1 United Nations Volunteer (UNV), 94 military, 242 police, 132 contractors, 10 consultants, 68 official visitors and 13 dependants. However, challenges resulting from the denial or delayed issuance of visas continue to have an impact on the ability of the Mission to implement the mandate, particularly through gaps in the deployment of personnel appointed to fill existing and sometimes key vacancies. Seven visa applications were rejected, including for senior-level vacancies. Those denials have posed a considerable challenge to the UNAMID senior leadership in fully implementing the recommendations of the strategic review.

III. Mandate implementation

32. During the reporting period, the Mission continued to focus on the three strategic priorities reflected in its revised benchmarks (see S/2014/279) endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2148 (2014) and further in resolution 2173 (2014).

A. Support for an inclusive peace process

High-level mediation and national dialogue

33. During the reporting period, a breakaway faction from SLA/MM signed a peace agreement with the Government of the Sudan in N'Djamena on 26 March. The faction, known as the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-Reformist Group, is led by a former SLA/MM commander and consists of approximately 400 combatants. The agreement, which was mediated by the Government of Chad, made no mention of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. It provides for a general amnesty for the members of the group, the integration of a limited number of its combatants into the Sudanese Armed Forces and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the remainder of its members. These parallel initiatives, which are outside the Doha Document for Peace framework or the ongoing efforts of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, aim at the fragmentation of the rebel movements by weakening the movements individually and the SRF alliance more generally.

34. No tangible progress has been made with regard to the direct negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatories armed movements of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, despite efforts by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, the Joint Chief Mediator and the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan. The direct talks have been suspended since late November 2014. Preparations for the Sudanese national dialogue between the Government and the political opposition, armed movements and civil society representatives also reached a deadlock, with the failure to hold a pre-dialogue procedural meeting scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa on 29 and 30 March (see para. 36).

35. In an effort to reinvigorate the national dialogue process ahead of the elections, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, in cooperation with the Berghof Foundation and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, invited the representatives of the Sudan Call (National Umma Party, Sudan Revolutionary Front, National Consensus Forces and Civil Society Initiative) to a meeting in Berlin from 24 to 28 February 2015. The meeting resulted in the signing of the Berlin Declaration, in which the participants expressed their readiness to engage in a national dialogue preparatory meeting to be convened by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel. They further reiterated their call on the Government to take measures to create an environment conducive to a successful outcome of the dialogue, including the formation of a transitional government, the postponement of the elections, the release of all political prisoners and the abolition of the constitutional amendments adopted by the National Assembly in January 2015.

36. Further to the outcome of the Berlin meeting, the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel invited the Government and allied political parties,

opposition political parties, armed movements and civil society to a meeting to discuss the mechanisms, structures, decision-making processes and implementation modalities and guarantees necessary for an inclusive and credible national dialogue. While this pre-dialogue procedural meeting was initially scheduled for 29 and 30 March in Addis Ababa, on 29 March, NCP issued a statement announcing its decision not to attend the meeting because invitations had been extended to all opposition forces instead of to the national dialogue Preparatory Committee only. Following the cancellation of the meeting, all opposition stakeholders condemned the decision of the Government to move forward with the elections and called for the creation of a conducive environment to enable an inclusive and credible national dialogue.

37. The armed movements from Darfur further called for a cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access as a basis for their future participation in the national dialogue. On 4 April, the Sudan Call signatories issued a statement calling for a new approach, which envisages a stronger mandate for the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel to lead a comprehensive process focusing on ending the persisting violent conflicts in the Sudan, protecting human rights and facilitating democratic transformation. They also demanded the establishment of a national government that would oversee the management and implementation of that dialogue.

38. The national elections in the Sudan, which were boycotted by all major opposition forces, took place from 13 to 16 April. On 27 April, the National Elections Commission announced that President Bashir won the presidential race with 94.5 per cent of the vote and that NCP had secured a majority of 323 out of 426 seats in the National Assembly. The general elections did not appear to have demonstrated any significant shift in the political dynamics in Darfur. This could be explained by the seeming lack of active participation of the population in the electoral process and the boycott by the opposition, including Darfur's rebel groups.

39. In his public address following the announcement, President Bashir expressed gratitude to Sudanese voters and reiterated his rejection of any criticism of the electoral process. Representatives of the opposition have, in turn, claimed that the boycott has successfully discredited the process and announced their rejection of the results.

Implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur

40. Progress in the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur by the Government of the Sudan, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and JEM-Sudan remains limited. At the end of February, LJM split and formed two new political parties, one led by the former Chair of LJM, Tijani al-Sissi, the other by Secretary Bahar Idriss Abu Garda. The Government could not prevent the split, but it allowed both to contest vacant seats in Darfur during the elections. For its part, JEM-Sudan did not complete its transformation into a political party but still fielded candidates during the elections.

41. On 16 March, the acting Joint Special Representative travelled to Doha for consultations with the Government of Qatar on the future of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, in view of the timetable and deadlines for implementing some of its specific provisions, in particular those related to the Darfur Regional Authority and the Darfur Regional Development Fund. According to the Doha Document, the

Darfur Regional Authority is scheduled to formally end by 14 July 2015, four years after the signing of the Doha process, with its extension or abolishment to be determined through a referendum. To date a referendum has not been held. The inclusion of the Doha Document in the national constitution in January 2015, however, suggests that the Darfur Regional Authority will remain in place beyond 14 July.

42. The first phase of the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations process was successfully concluded during the reporting period. Community outreach meetings were conducted at the local level throughout Darfur with all stakeholders. The meetings focused on identifying priority issues to be addressed in each locality, and selected representatives for the second phase of the process, which has been scheduled to take place at the end of May. The Government of the Sudan released $2 million as part of its contribution to the funding of the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations. This constituted a positive development in the light of the serious funding constraints the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultations is facing, which raised questions about the future of the consultations it had launched.

43. The final security arrangements of the 6,525 LJM former combatants commenced on 28 February 2015. Of that caseload, only 2,018, including 314 women, were found to be eligible for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. Some 1,000 ex-combatants will be integrated into the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan Police Forces, while the remaining 1,018 will be demobilized and provided with reintegration opportunities. UNAMID and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are providing technical assistance to the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission for the planning and implementation of the demobilization and reintegration of the identified former combatants.

B. Protection of civilians

Provision of physical protection

44. The total number of patrols conducted by the UNAMID military force during the period under review decreased compared to the previous period, owing to the access denials imposed by Government forces. UNAMID conducted a total of 10,376 patrols, comprising 5,567 routine patrols, 682 short-range patrols, 204 long-range patrols, 2,007 night patrols, 178 humanitarian armed escorts and 1,738 logistics and administrative armed escorts. A total of 5,008 villages were covered during these patrols.

45. The UNAMID police conducted 4,282 patrols, comprising 2,187 confidence-building patrols to internally displaced communities, and 2,095 patrols specifically designed to address the security needs of the most vulnerable civilians. In addition to enhancing the Mission's visibility in the vicinity of internally displaced persons camps and villages, these patrols provided an opportunity for the military, police and civilian personnel to work jointly in assessing protection risks and gathering information for early warning indicators.

46. The Jebel Marra area remained the most volatile region, the military operations by the Sudanese Armed Forces and SLA/AW having negatively affected

the civilians inhabiting the area. Civilians from a number of villages in the vicinity of Golo and Rockero towns and the outlying areas of Jebel Marra were displaced to internally displaced persons camps in Guldo, Nertiti and Zalingei. UNAMID continued to provide protection to these internally displaced persons, including through increased patrols to internally displaced persons camps and sites.

47. In Northern Darfur, UNAMID continued to focus on the protection of the most vulnerable groups, such as women, and to tailor its initiatives to their protection needs. To this end, a protection committee was formed in Fata Bornu and Kassab internally displaced persons camps in Kutum locality on 29 and 30 March, respectively, which included women representatives and other community leaders, as well as UNAMID components based at the Kutum team site, to coordinate relevant protection activities, including firewood collection patrols in the area. In Southern Darfur, the provision of firewood escorts for Kalma and Al Salaam internally displaced persons camps was reactivated following an increase in the number of attacks on women when engaged in livelihood activities.

48. Intercommunal conflict also continued to generate humanitarian needs, most notably around Mellit in Northern Darfur and Katila in Southern Darfur. An inter-agency mission to Mellit and neighbouring areas was initially postponed by the authorities, but a team reached the area between 21 and 23 April. Displaced persons had dispersed across a large area, creating challenges in producing comprehensive data on needs. Humanitarian partners rehabilitated the water station in Mellit hospital; health partners delivered medical supplies and essential drugs to various health facilities adequate for 24,000 people for one month. In Katila, humanitarian partners provided water and sanitation support to more than 3,000 people, as well as initial food assistance to some 1,800 vulnerable people.

49. Following extensive consultations between the Mission, humanitarian agencies and local authorities, the 7,222 internally displaced persons who had sought refuge at the UNAMID Um Baru team site in January and had been registered by the agencies were relocated to nearby new sites. The decision was taken in view of the overcrowding and lack of hygiene in the team site, which caused health risks for the internally displaced persons, humanitarian workers and UNAMID personnel. The Mission has been monitoring the security situation in the area and conducted confidence-building patrols to the villages of origin of the internally displaced persons to assess their living conditions. As of April, some internally displaced persons had begun to return to their villages owing to the improving security situation. Concurrently, Darfur State experienced some of the highest fatality rates in a continuing measles outbreak, which by the time of reporting had reached 32 localities across the country, illustrating the region's heightened vulnerability to public health emergencies.

50. UNAMID continued to mitigate the threat posed by explosive remnants of war through clearance of suspected hazardous areas. During the reporting period, 467 items of unexploded ordnance were located and destroyed during clearance operations in 21 villages. UNAMID also collected evidence of two air-delivered cluster bombs near Kirigiyati village, Northern Darfur, and disposed of them safely. Having completed the task of destroying over 1.9 million shelf life expired small arms ammunition at the Zam Zam team site, UNAMID is currently planning to carry out similar activities in Nyala, Southern Darfur. The clearance activities and safe destruction of these items will improve safety and security in the community. More

than 59,000 civilians, including women and children, received explosive ordnance risk education messages through direct communication. Radio drama broadcasts conveyed safety messages to an estimated 250,000 civilians.

51. In an effort to strengthen national capacity, UNAMID has trained and equipped a national organization to conduct explosive ordnance clearance activities in Darfur. At the request of the Government police, UNAMID refurbished three weapons and ammunition storage facilities for Government Police in El Fasher. Further assistance is planned for the four remaining Darfur States. Training on weapons and ammunition management will be provided to Government police personnel. Planning is ongoing to provide sustainable income generation activities for survivors of unexploded ordnance accidents and people with disabilities across the five Darfur States.

Logistical and security support to humanitarian operations

52. During the reporting period, UNAMID provided 67 armed escorts (against 173 in the last reporting period) to facilitate delivery of humanitarian assistance and assessment and monitoring missions in different parts of Darfur. Most of these were to the World Food Programme, which delivered 3,002 tons of food to needy populations in various locations across Darfur.

53. In addition, UNAMID has shared with humanitarian actors a matrix showing the storage capacity at its team sites, in order to enable the prepositioning of emergency relief items in the proximity of hot spots. The Mission accommodated 80 aid workers at its residential facilities across Darfur and is co-locating with some agencies at some of its sector offices and team sites. Humanitarian assets such as vehicles and other machinery also continue to be kept inside UNAMID facilities for safety and security. Under these arrangements, a total of 117 vehicles belonging to agencies are currently being kept at UNAMID facilities.

54. Humanitarian partners continued to respond to the needs of newly displaced people, while maintaining key support for the larger displaced population. At the time of reporting, it had been possible to reach some 50,000 newly displaced people in Northern, Central and Southern Darfur States with basic humanitarian assistance. Owing to the easing of intercommunal tensions in the area, humanitarian actors also reached some 6,300 previously inaccessible people in Morlanga in Mukjar locality, Central Darfur, who had been displaced since June 2014. Following advocacy by humanitarian partners, humanitarian operations were able to resume on 3 May in Southern Darfur. In the Dereig internally displaced persons camp near Nyala, food distribution for 21,161 beneficiaries recommenced. In Kass, local authorities allowed World Vision International to conduct a general food distribution for over 55,000 people. Restrictions on movement into internally displaced persons camps in Nyala town were also lifted, allowing operating partners access to Kalma, El Salam and Al Sereif camps.

Promoting a protective environment

55. The human rights violations and abuses documented during the reporting period were similar to those recorded during the previous period. UNAMID documented the occurrence of 118 new alleged human rights violations and abuses involving 252 victims (17 minors), compared to 83 incidents involving 191 victims during the last reporting period. UNAMID confirmed that 79 of these were cases of

human rights violations and abuses, while 39 cases remain unconfirmed, although they are highly likely to have occurred on the basis of corroboration from various sources. Of the 118 cases, 55 cases involving 134 victims were allegedly perpetrated by the Government of the Sudan security forces and proxy entities. The remaining 63 cases, with 118 victims, were attributed to unidentified armed men, often described by the victims as "armed Arab men". UNAMID documented violations of the right to life, accounting for 25 cases with 47 victims; violations of the right to physical integrity, accounting for 51 cases with 111 victims (7 minors); 10 cases of abduction involving 18 victims; 4 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention involving 29 victims; and 28 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, involving 49 victims (5 minors).

56. The right to redress by victims of human rights violations continued to be affected by the reluctance of law enforcement authorities to pursue cases brought to their attention. This failure to address human rights violations perpetuates the insecure environment for civilians in Darfur and contributes to widespread impunity. For example, 30 of the 118 documented cases were reported by victims to the Sudan law enforcement authorities. However, only 7 cases have been investigated, resulting in 5 arrests, whereas in the remaining 23 reported cases, UNAMID confirmed with victims and/or witnesses that law enforcement authorities did not take any action. Government authorities have cited a lack of capacity of the law enforcement authorities and lack of information on the identity of perpetrators as reasons for the lack of progress in investigating cases. Victims and their families blamed lack of willingness on the part of the authorities to investigate cases.

57. During the reporting period, UNAMID trained and sensitized national partners on child rights and child protection. The capacity-building programme was aimed at securing the community ownership of the child protection agenda, and to strengthen monitoring, reporting, response and prevention of grave child rights violations. Between 30 March and 2 April, the United Nations Children's Fund supported training on the Media and Reporting Mechanism, which was facilitated by the co-Chairs of the Darfur Taskforce; 22 members of the technical working group in Central Darfur benefited from that training.

58. During the reporting period, a mapping conducted by UNAMID indicated that out of 65 administrative localities, only 19 have formal courts, while only 29 localities have Government police stations. This seriously undermines the ability of Darfur's rule of law institutions to contribute to combatting criminality and impunity. Judicial authorities have, at the same time, made some efforts to improve the delivery of and access to justice. Between 29 March and 1 April, during the first visit of an incumbent Chief Justice to Darfur since 2005, three new courts were inaugurated in Nyala, Southern Darfur, as well as the new judiciary headquarters in El Fasher, Northern Darfur.

59. Prosecutors trained by UNAMID have now been deployed to various localities across Darfur: 20 to Northern Darfur (5 of them assigned to the Special Court for Darfur Crimes), 25 to Southern Darfur, 11 to Central Darfur and 10 to Western Darfur. Lack of office space, equipment and accommodation remains an issue impacting the effective discharge of their duties.

60. In its efforts to support the functioning of the Special Court and related transitional justice mechanisms, UNAMID sponsored a team of three Sudanese prosecutors, including the Special Prosecutor, on a two-day study tour on 23 and

24 March to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, in order to strengthen their capacity in prosecuting serious crimes according to the standards of international humanitarian law.

61. On 14 April, in Central Darfur, inmates in the Zalingei prison staged a violent break and seized a machine gun-mounted police vehicle from the prison. In an exchange of fire, one police officer and one prisoner were killed, while five other police officers and two prisoners were injured. Thirty-two prisoners, including 12 inmates on death row, escaped towards Saraf Umra. That incident highlighted continued security challenges in Darfur prisons, including a lack of basic security infrastructure and management and operational capacity.

62. The implementation of community-based labour intensive projects included a variety of training projects for a total of 1,200 direct beneficiaries from 15 communities to reduce their risk of being conscripted into conflict.

63. During the reporting period, UNAMID police continued to work closely with the Darfur Police in its capacity-building and sensitization training in order to foster a protective environment. The focus of capacity-building was on the use of proportionate and less than lethal force in quelling public order disturbances and on investigation of heinous crimes, specifically those related to aggravated gender-based violence. Sensitization training of the Darfur police revolved around working together with community policing volunteers of internally displaced persons camps to resolve minor infringements at the community level and to create an environment of trust between long-term internally displaced persons and the Darfur police. English language training classes were regularly organized for Darfur police personnel to enable them to interact with the United Nations country team, especially the humanitarian component, which receives escorts from the Darfur police in delivering relief materials. A total of over 1,700 male and 350 female Darfur police officers received professional training from their UNAMID police counterparts.

64. During the same period, over 400 Community Police Volunteers from internally displaced persons camps received training in community policing essentials, and over 3,000 internally displaced persons, mostly children but also women and girls, received training in English language. The emphasis on community-oriented policing and continuous interaction between UNAMID police officers assisted by the formed police units and the internally displaced persons is incrementally improving the latter's access and interaction with the Government police and security organizations.

Local conflict mediation

65. While UNAMID, in collaboration with Government authorities and other stakeholders, has continued to support the mediation of intercommunal conflicts, relapses in existing conflicts and fresh outbreaks have continued, leading to increased protection needs for the vulnerable population. In this context, the emphasis continues to be on early warning, preventive measures, capacity-building and efforts to address the root causes.

66. The Mission facilitated mediation through engaging *ajaweed* (traditional mediators), *ageed* and *hakamat* (women traditional war singers), native administration and community leaders. Following the resurgence of conflict

between the Berti and Zayadiya tribes in Northern Darfur, the Mission effectively used this approach to engage both tribes and the mediation committee to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Seven meetings were held in March with key stakeholders both in Northern Darfur and Khartoum as part of efforts to reach a peaceful and speedy resolution of the conflict. Similarly, on 6 April, UNAMID facilitated a meeting between the Darfur Regional Authority's Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission and 13 community leaders from the Zayadiya tribe on the issue. The Mission also engaged with Darfuri civil society organizations and influential personalities in Khartoum to consolidate efforts for dialogue and reconciliation.

67. In its continued efforts to support the reconciliation between the Ma'alia and Southern Rezeigat communities, UNAMID engaged with the leadership of the two communities and other key stakeholders, following their inability to reach an agreement at a Government-led reconciliation conference in February 2015 in Merowe, Northern State. Following the resumption of clashes between the two tribes on 10 and 11 May, through its continued engagement with tribal leaders and Government authorities, UNAMID continued to exert efforts to mitigate the impact of the fighting on the civilian population in the area. On 14 May, the Mission facilitated the visit of the High-level Government delegation to El Daien, Abu Karinka and Adila with the aim of reducing tensions between the two communities. In addition, UNAMID assisted the Sudanese authorities in evacuating nine of the critically injured to Khartoum for treatment. It also provided Eastern Darfur State medical authorities with medicines and other surgical equipment that were in short supply. In addition, UNAMID coordinated closely with the United Nations country team to facilitate delivery of critically urgent assistance to those affected by the conflict. The Mission's troops in Eastern Darfur raised their level of preparedness and put in place proactive response measures to address any potential demands for physical protection or shelter for affected civilians.

68. The Mission continued to support the Massalit and Fallata and all other stakeholders engaged in the search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict that erupted between these tribes on 29 January. Two separate meetings were held with the leaders of the Advisory Councils of the two tribes on 12 March, whereby both parties reaffirmed their commitment to resolve the conflict peacefully. UNAMID is working collaboratively with local authorities in Southern Darfur to conduct further reconciliation meetings for both parties.

69. These fruitful interactions built upon previous UNAMID efforts in February in Southern Darfur, which engaged *ageed* and *hakamat*, mobilizing them to play a pivotal role in peacebuilding. Supported by local authorities, these efforts led to the formation of six joint local committees comprising *ageed* and *hakamat* to entice them to desist from, pre-empt and prevent communal conflicts.

IV. Implementation of the strategic review recommendations

A. Improved effectiveness and staff streamlining

70. The Mission has continued to implement the recommendations of my special report of 25 February 2014 (S/2014/163) to further improve its capabilities and effectiveness. Currently, UNAMID has 40 units deployed (27 military and

13 formed police units). The Operational Readiness Assessment team established to inspect and train units in team sites on areas targeted for improvement noted steady progress in the performance of the various contingents. During the reporting period, the military component completed deployments of an Indonesian battalion, a Pakistani battalion and a Bangladeshi reserve company.

71. The serviceability of contingent-owned equipment continued to show improvement, reflecting positively on the performance of UNAMID troops and the formed police units. Out of the 27 military units deployed, 19 have equipment shortfalls below 10 per cent, while 8 have shortfalls in excess of 10 per cent. This is an improvement, compared to 13 units with shortfalls below 10 per cent and 11 units with shortfalls exceeding 10 per cent in the last reporting period. There has also been a slight improvement in the overall serviceability of equipment of military units from 86.7 per cent in the last reporting period to 88.9 per cent as at 30 April. The armoured personnel carrier serviceability rate, which was a major impediment to effective patrolling, is now at 85 per cent for military units and 88 per cent for the formed police units. The major equipment serviceability rate is now over 90 per cent for 8 of the 13 formed police units (as against 6 during the previous assessment). Overall, the memorandum of understanding serviceability rate is now 86 per cent for the formed police units, as against 83 per cent in the third quarter of 2014. The robust reactions by units in attacks and the proactivity shown in resolving threatening situations against internally displaced persons during the reporting period are indicators of continuous improvement as a result of the requested change of attitude, robustness and training.

72. Secretariat and Mission staff cooperated closely to complete the first phase of the streamlining exercise, abolishing 790 positions (213 international, 257 national and 320 UNVs). Teams were established at United Nations Headquarters and the Mission to prepare and synchronize the steps needed to ensure a smooth and fair process. With the support of a United Nations Headquarters team, the Mission successfully conducted comparative reviews, identified qualified international staff for their deployment to other missions, assisted staff in the preparation of résumés, obtained approval for payment of termination indemnity in accordance with the rules of the Organization, prepared and conducted a job fair for the placement of national staff inviting Sudanese companies, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to provide advice, and devised a communications and security strategy to respond adequately to the impact of this sizable reduction on the Darfur economy. The comparative reviews for national and international staff were completed in February, followed by counselling of staff who could not be deployed to other missions or find jobs in the Sudan. The abolition of posts was completed by 31 March 2015 without any security incident. A further 488 posts (476 national, 10 international and 2 UNVs) have been proposed to the Fifth Committee for reduction in the 2015/16 budget as part of the second phase of the streamlining.

73. Simultaneously, UNAMID has continued to implement the reinforcement of substantive staff to field offices in accordance with the recommendations of the streamlining report. Sector Joint Operations Centres have been established in all five Darfur States to further improve timely and accurate reporting and facilitate operational coordination. The recruitment process for the post of Chief Joint Operations Centres has been completed and deployment should be finalized during the next reporting period. After a two-year vacancy, the Chief Public Information Officer arrived to the Mission on 22 February and has focused, with the help of a

senior consultant, on the UNAMID communications strategy and outreach. After some delay in the issuance of a visa, the Director of Mission Support finally took up his functions in El Fasher on 10 March.

B. Transfer of mandated tasks to the United Nations country team

74. Further to paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 2173 (2014), UNAMID and the United Nations country team in the Sudan have identified relevant tasks that could be transferred to the latter following the revision of the Mission's strategic priorities. As part of the process, an analysis was undertaken regarding which of these mandated tasks could only be carried out by UNAMID and which tasks should be implemented jointly with the country team and in which the latter would have a comparative advantage. This analysis was conducted on the basis of the integrated strategic framework for UNAMID and the country team for the period 2014-2016, which guides their cooperation during that period and will also serve as a basic framework for the operationalization of the transfer.

75. In accordance with its first strategic priority, UNAMID will continue to support efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution to the Darfur conflict through the mediation led by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel and the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. The country team will continue, in close collaboration with the Mission, to support the reintegration aspect of the Doha Document planning and security arrangements. Core-mandated tasks related to the physical protection of civilians and the provision of security and logistical support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance are inextricably linked to the Mission's logistical and military assets, as well as the extent of its presence on the ground, and therefore cannot be transferred to the country team. Similarly, UNAMID will continue to monitor and report on human rights, sexual and gender-based violence and criminal trials and support community policing. UNAMID and the country team will jointly implement the early warning and response system and the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict. The Mission will continue to explore the possibility of gradually transferring certain ordnance disposal services to national institutions, while capacity-building and risk education activities would be transferred to the country team. The Mission police component will continue to work jointly with UNDP and other partners towards the establishment of an effective, responsible and accountable Sudanese police service. Under the Global Focal Point umbrella, and with a view to their gradual transfer to it, the country team will work jointly with the Mission in enhancing the prison system and strengthening capacity of rural courts and transitional justice mechanisms. The country team will work on improving access to justice and provide capacity-building in the area of human rights.

76. Based on its extensive presence across Darfur and good offices role, the Mission remains ideally placed to provide logistical support for local mediation efforts and to promote dialogue. UNAMID will expand its partnership with the country team in community stabilization, including prevention of recruitment among youth, community violence reduction and arms reduction. The country team may complement these efforts through projects aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict, particularly through the Darfur Development Strategy, if funding is available, including capacity-building of local mediation mechanisms, support to

national reforms regarding access to, and use and management of, land and other natural resources and migration-related livelihood issues.

77. In line with the strategic review of UNAMID in 2014 and the revised strategic priorities, the Mission has gradually discontinued tasks related to the monitoring of and advocacy with the location population and capacity-building on HIV/AIDS and gender mainstreaming issues. While the country team has a comparative advantage in these activities, it would require additional funding and support in order to carry them out.

78. The operational plan for the implementation of the transfer, which will be developed jointly by UNAMID and the country team, will be based on benchmarks and will need to take into account certain preconditions, including the upfront mobilization of adequate financial resources from the outset of the process and necessary support by relevant actors, including the Government of the Sudan. In the long term, a further transfer of tasks will require a more conducive security environment throughout Darfur allowing for the safe, rapid and unimpeded civilian-led delivery of assistance and a significant improvement in the protection of civilians, which, in turn, would lay the groundwork for development and recovery and also increase the availability of international donor funding.

79. On 10 May, UNAMID adopted its revised protection of civilians strategy following consultations within the Mission Joint Protection Group and the country team. The strategy provides for a strategic, geographical and operational prioritization of protection threats in Darfur that will serve as the basis for the Mission's joint planning with the country team.

C. Exit strategy

80. In its resolution 2173 (2014) of 27 August 2014, the Security Council requested an assessment of the implementation of the 2014 strategic review of UNAMID (S/2014/138), including specific achievements under the revised strategic priorities and progress in addressing the challenges facing the Mission. It also requested an overview of significant developments in Darfur and recommendations on the mandate of UNAMID, steps towards an exit strategy and a handover of certain tasks to the United Nations country team. My special report of 6 March 2015 (S/2015/163) provided an analysis of the situation and concludes that given the lack of progress on the benchmarks and the significant deterioration of the situation, the three strategic priorities of UNAMID as defined in 2014 remain valid.

81. A joint working group was established between the African Union, the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan to respond to the request for an exit strategy and address particular concerns raised by the Government of the Sudan in this regard. Following agreement on its terms of reference in February 2015, the joint working group met in Khartoum on 17 March and, between 18 and 24 March, travelled to all five Darfur States to assess the security and humanitarian situation and ascertain options for a smooth exit, in keeping with the agreed terms of reference. The joint working group met again from 15 to 19 April and from 13 to 19 May to discuss recommendations to be presented to the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council ahead of mandate renewal discussions in June.

82. While a conclusion could not be reached by the joint working group by the time of the writing of the present report, the joint working group discussions were conducted in an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for the positions of all sides. The consultations with the Government of the Sudan have been suspended and shall be resumed at a time yet to be confirmed.

83. In keeping with the findings of the 2014 strategic review of UNAMID and my report of 6 March 2015 (S/2015/163), which reiterated the validity of the three strategic priorities given the challenging security and humanitarian situation, the African Union/United Nations team proposed a two-pronged approach to the Government. The first element would be the gradual and phased withdrawal of the UNAMID force from Western Darfur and a progressive handover of its tasks to the Government and the United Nations country team, as the conditions for the consolidation of security in the State are created by the national authorities. Fighting has remained concentrated in the centre of Darfur, and there has been no major armed group activity or any major intercommunal fighting in Western Darfur in the past two years. The gradual reduction of the UNAMID presence in Western Darfur, with a handover to the Government and a transfer of tasks to the United Nations country team, would reflect the overall efforts of UNAMID to concentrate on its three strategic priorities, while further demonstrating flexibility and efficiency by reducing its size. As part of this, UNAMID would also close three other team sites in Northern and Southern Darfur that, in accordance with findings of the recently conducted military capability study, are assessed to be in areas that do not currently necessitate the presence of UNAMID.

84. The withdrawal from the other areas/States will be based on progress towards the achievement of the UNAMID benchmarks. The premise of this second part of the exit strategy is that a political solution to the conflict must be found and direct talks between the parties initiated, starting with a cessation of hostilities. Such negotiations will lay the groundwork for recovery and create the conditions for development.

85. Both elements of the exit strategy require satisfactory security, humanitarian and early recovery arrangements for the protection of civilians, in particular for the internally displaced persons and voluntary returns. Equally important is the requirement to address intercommunal conflict through comprehensive and inclusive consultations with the communities, the establishment of appropriate legal and political frameworks and the reinforcement of the justice and law enforcement sectors.

V. Financial aspects

86. The General Assembly, by its resolution 69/261 of 29 December 2014, appropriated the amount of $1,153,611,300 for the maintenance of UNAMID for the period of 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015. As at 7 May 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNAMID Special Account amounted to $263.9 million, while the total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations amounted to $1,958.6 million. Reimbursement to contributing Governments for contingent-owned equipment costs and for troop and formed police costs has been made for the period up to 31 December 2014 and 31 January 2015, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VI. Observations and recommendations

87. Since my last report, there has been no tangible progress towards the resolution of the conflict in Darfur. The fighting between the Government of the Sudan and the armed movements continued and resulted in high numbers of newly displaced persons. The second phase of the Government's military offensive, Operation Decisive Summer, was aimed to put an end to all armed rebellions in the Sudan. In Darfur, the main focus of this phase was on reclaiming Jebel Marra and preventing the armed movements from crossing the borders with South Sudan and regrouping. Despite their numerical superiority, better equipment and logistics, the objective of the Sudanese Armed Forces/Rapid Support Forces joint operations, which was to dismantle the rebel stronghold of Jebel Marra and establish a firm grip on the area, was not achieved.

88. Despite the continuation of local mediation efforts, the underlying causes of intercommunal violence remain largely unaddressed. This has led to periodic outbreaks of violence and an increase in the protection needs of vulnerable populations. Beyond the resource conflicts, the destabilizing impact of broader political tensions, the proliferation of small arms, the influence of numerous militias in the region and the manner in which local authorities have responded to insecurity have contributed to aggravation of the situation. Criminality also remains a major source of insecurity. Meanwhile, direct talks between the Government and the non-signatory armed movements, which began in Addis Ababa in November 2014, have not resumed. I reiterate that there is no military solution to the conflict in Darfur and urge the Government and the armed movements to engage constructively in a negotiated settlement, without any preconditions. I call on the Government to immediately investigate the use of cluster munitions in Northern Darfur, which are prohibited under international law and pose a particular threat to the civilian population. I also call on the Government to address decisively intercommunal violence by focusing on its root causes.

89. I regret that, on 26 April, the Government of the Sudan denied a flight request for the emergency medical evacuation of an Ethiopian peacekeeper injured while performing his duties in Mujkar, Western Darfur, as reported in paragraph 28 of the present report. The peacekeeper died hours later. I convey my condolences to the Government of Ethiopia and to the family of the deceased. I call on the Government of the Sudan to respect the status of forces agreement signed with the United Nations, lift all restrictions placed on UNAMID and remove all obstructions to the implementation of its mandate. I also call on the Government to lift all restrictions imposed on humanitarian actors.

90. On 27 August 2014, under its resolution 2173 (2014), the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMID for a period of 10 months, until 30 June 2015. In my special report of 6 March 2015 (S/2015/163), I provided the Council with an analysis of the implementation of the strategic review of UNAMID, which concluded that the three strategic priorities of the Mission remain valid. Given the current situation in Darfur and the progress made towards implementing the strategic priorities of UNAMID and in addressing the main challenges identified by the review, I recommend that the Security Council consider extending the mandate of the Mission for 12 months until 30 June 2016, without modification.

91. With respect to the UNAMID exit strategy, I call on the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council to provide clear direction on this issue, in order to allow a swift conclusion of this process.

92. In conclusion, I would like to thank the Acting Joint Special Representative/ Joint Chief Mediator, Abiodun Bashua, and all the women and men of UNAMID, the United Nations and the non-governmental organizations, who, in the face of considerable challenges, continue their relentless efforts to improve the lives of the people of Darfur. I also commend my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, Haile Menkerios, and Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Abdulsalami Abubakar of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel for their efforts to resolve the conflicts in the Sudan.

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